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HCFA Information
Resource Center

How You Won't Get AIDS

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control,
Atlanta, discusses some myths and
answers some questions
about the AIDS virus.



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AMERICA
RESPONDS
TO AIDS

An Important Message from the U.S. Public Health Service
Centers for Disease Control



People today are worried about getting AIDS. Some of them should be worried and need to take some pretty tough precautions. But many others are not in any real danger of contracting AIDS, even though they think they might be. The purpose of this brochure is to tell you how you can and, just as important, how you can't become infected with the AIDS virus.

Regardless of what you may have heard, the AIDS virus is easily avoided.

You can't just "catch" AIDS like a cold or flu, because the virus is a different type. The AIDS virus is transmitted through sexual intercourse, the sharing of drug needles, or to babies before or during birth.

- You can't get the AIDS virus through everyday contact with the people around you in school, in the workplace, at parties, stores, or by swimming in a pool, even if a person is infected with the AIDS virus. Students attending school with someone infected with the AIDS virus are not in danger from casual contact.
 - You won't get AIDS from a mosquito bite. The AIDS virus is not transmitted through a mosquito's salivary glands like other diseases such as malaria or yellow fever. You can't get it from bed bugs, lice, flies, or other insects, either.
 - You won't get it from clothes, a telephone, or a toilet seat.
 - It can't be passed through a glass or eating utensils.
 - You don't have to worry about shaking hands, hugging, or being in a crowded elevator with a person who is infected with the AIDS virus, or who has AIDS.
 - You won't get AIDS from saliva, sweat, tears, urine, or excrement.
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Would You Like More Information?

If you'd like to know more about AIDS or whether you should consider a blood test, talk to your doctor, local health department, or hospital. In addition, you can get helpful, confidential information from the National AIDS Information line, 1-800-342-AIDS. It's open 24 hours a day. The Spanish hotline is 1-800-344-SIDA (1-800-344-7432). The hotline number for the hearing impaired is 1-800-AIDS-TTY.

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- You won't get AIDS from food that has been handled, prepared, or served by someone who is infected with the AIDS virus.
- You won't get AIDS from a kiss.
- Don't worry about getting AIDS from everyday contact with a person with AIDS. You need to take precautions such as wearing rubber gloves only when blood is present.

The Difference Between Giving And Receiving Blood

1. **Giving blood.** You are not now, nor have you ever been, in danger of getting AIDS from giving blood at a blood bank. The needles that are used for blood donations are brand-new. Once they are used, they are destroyed. There is no way you can come into contact with the AIDS virus by donating blood.
2. **Receiving blood.** The risk of getting AIDS from a blood transfusion has been greatly reduced. In the interest of making the blood supply as safe as possible, donors are screened for risk factors and donated blood is tested for the AIDS antibody. Call your local blood bank if you have questions.

How Do You Get AIDS?

You can become infected by having sex — oral, anal, or vaginal — with someone who is infected with the AIDS virus. You can be infected by sharing drug needles and syringes with an infected person.

Babies of women who have been infected with the AIDS virus may be born with the infection because it can be transmitted from the mother's blood to the baby before or during birth.

People with hemophilia and others have been infected by receiving blood.

Can You Become Infected?

Yes, if you engage in high risk behavior. The male homosexual population was the first in this country to be affected by the disease. No matter what you have read or heard, the number of heterosexual cases is growing.

People who have died of AIDS in the United States have been male and female, rich and poor, white, black, Hispanic, Asian, and native American.

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AMERICA
RESPONDS
TO AIDS

Part of the America Responds To AIDS brochure series.
This brochure has been prepared by the Centers for Disease Control, U.S. Public Health Service. The Centers for Disease Control is the government agency responsible for the prevention and control of diseases, including AIDS, in the United States.